Human Events *A Weekly Analysis for the American Citizen*
Editorial Office 1323 M STREET, WASHINGTON 5, D. C. *Telephone* NATIONAL 2066
VOL. V, NO. 16, *Issue Number* 221, APRIL 21, 1948 ★ *Editors:* FELIX MORLEY & FRANK C. HANIGHEN

APR 26 1948

DECLINE AND FALL

by Freda Utley

In the remote age before the First World War it was believed in Western Europe and America that we were living in the Age of Reason. History, it was thought, was no longer to be the record of "the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind", but rather a record of human progress since the Dark and Middle Ages. Meredith expressed the confidence of his age in the possibilities of man's development when he wrote:

> "Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed, to
> stature of the gods will they attain."

Today, after fighting two wars to "save democracy", we seem to have relapsed into an era of mental, moral and political darkness. Far from becoming more like gods, the beast within us all appears to be dominant. Stalin and Hitler pointed the way and we have followed in their train as blindly as the Gadarene swine.

The cruelties which we, the descendants of the "Age of Enlightenment", have inflicted upon our enemies, although more refined than those perpetrated by an Attila or a Genghis Khan, match them in effectiveness and inhumanity. Nor is there much choice between the barbaric acts committed by the Nazis and the Japanese and those for which we, or our Allies, are responsible.

Since victory brought an end to indiscriminate bombing we have, it is true, ceased to slaughter men, women and children wholesale. Nor have we installed gas chambers on the Nazi model to kill off our defeated enemies. But, by depriving the Germans of their lands, machinery and ships, and by agreeing to let our Allies, the Czechs, Poles and Russians, drive millions of people from their homes simply because they were of German race, we are morally responsible for the miserable death of uncounted numbers.

We do not, in America, condone slavery. But at Yalta, President Roosevelt, in the name of the American people, agreed to let our Allies keep millions of prisoners of war as slave laborers, and we handed over our own German prisoners to the French, who killed many of them off by overwork and starvation.

Whereas the ancient Romans paraded the leaders of defeated nations in Triumphs, we have held Nuremburg trials in which we condemned the vanquished for crimes against humanity which we or our Allies were in process of committing ourselves.

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Our transgressions against the principles we once believed in and the international and moral laws we profess to uphold, have thus ranged from the adoption of totalitarian concepts of collective guilt and punishment to the sanctioning of looting and slavery under the polite name of reparations. In letting our policies be directed by those who advocate vengeance or retribution upon innocent and guilty alike, we have jettisoned the principles for which we fought and have immensely strengthened the Communists, who never believed in these principles.

II

Our follies have exceeded our crimes. By the concessions made to Stalin's ruthless ambition and greed, at a time when there was no excuse for concessions; by the betrayal of weak Allies at Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam and their deliverance, together with the defeated small nations, to Communist domination; we have given the command of Europe to totalitarian Russia.

By agreeing to the confiscation of all German property held abroad we have enabled the Soviet Government to hold up Austria to ransom. By agreeing to the destruction or dismantlement of German factories, as well as to the gift of 25 per cent of Germany's farm lands to Poland and the occupation by Russia of the remaining eastern zone, we have saddled our own taxpayers with the burden of supplying the German people with the food necessary to prevent mass starvation.

We have raised the specter of a Communist Asia by our sellout of China at Yalta, and our subsequent efforts to make another Benes out of Chiang Kai-shek by forcing the Generalissimo to share power with the Communists in a coalition government.

We have thrown away the fruits of victory as unthinkingly or stupidly as we have discarded the moral values upon which our own liberties are based, and the principles for which we professed to fight.

If the new Dark Age upon which we seem to have entered is not the precursor of the end of the human race; if humanity emerges into another Renaissance and the record of our times is not lost in the atomic destruction of cities, libraries and civilized life; some future Gibbon may write of America in much the same terms as the great Eighteenth Century historian who chronicled the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

III

Here, it may be said, was a great Republic dedicated to the principles of liberty and justice, and to the belief that all men are created equal. That Republic had incomparable material resources and

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an energetic, industrious and literate population, blessed with a higher standard of living than that of any people anywhere at any time. These United States, in 1945, had won a victory which destroyed the power of their enemies and weakened their Allies, while immensely increasing their own productive capacity. America had the power to enforce a just and lasting peace.

Yet, within a few years, our future Gibbon may write, all these advantages were thrown away. America's standard of living was reduced to the European level by subsidizing its Allies without insisting that they abandon the policies which were ruining them, and through a treatment of the conquered which rendered Europe incapable of providing its own subsistence.

The liberties of the American people were drastically curtailed through the maintenance of the huge armed forces necessitated by an unenlightened foreign policy, and the consequent increasing control of the State over all economic activity. The Christian principles which had been the shield of America's liberties and the source of its strength were forgotten. The Great Republic of the West then lost the confidence of the peoples of the world thanks to its own transgressions against the moral code.

So many nations were alienated by the vacillations, inconsistencies and blundering follies of the United States that its deadly enemy, the U. S. S. R., was in a position to destroy it, even as the barbarians destroyed the Roman Empire similarly weakened by the decline of morals, State bankruptcy and administrative incapacity.

This forecast is, I sincerely hope, too pessimistic. Yet, reading the statements made by most of the men who make the headlines in the American press, one is forcibly reminded of the ancient Greek aphorism that "those whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad".

IV

Leaving aside consideration of President Roosevelt's follies, which arose from that overweening pride, self-confidence and vanity which the Greeks called hubris, let us consider only the "Marshall Plan" designed to remedy the dangerous world situation created by the Administration's past errors.

What is now called the Economic Co-operation Administration was originally "sold" to the American people as a substitute for defense measures. An editorial in the New York Times, on January 16, under the

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heading "ERP or Armament" summarized the views of General Marshall, Secretaries Forrestal and Royal and others as follows:

> ". . . The picture that emerges from their combined presentation is that of a world in which we have the choice of investing adequate funds in a promising effort to help Western Europe get on its feet, or abandoning Europe to revolution and to Russia, which would demand even greater expenditures to arm the United States for self-defense in a hostile world."

Just two months later, President Truman was calling for a selective draft and Universal Military Training and it was argued that financial aid to Europe will only fatten the goose for Russia's eating unless America is prepared to maintain huge armed forces to defend the Old World. Even now it is not recognized that the Truman-Marshall-Vandenberg policy of shoring up every weak State on the borders of the Soviet Empire must eventually ruin us without weakening the Soviet Union. Money and mercenaries did not save Rome.

Without the reconstitution of Germany as a sovereign State where men may enjoy the liberty which we call an "unalienable right", there can be no hope of saving Europe from Russia, unless America is prepared to maintain huge armed forces in Europe. An encouraging election in Italy does not of itself change the underlying picture.

Yet the United States still lets the apostles of vengeance and believers in the innate wickedness of certain races direct its policy. We have done, and are still doing, everything we can to drive the Germans into Russia's arms.

Instead of using our economic power and influence to force the peoples of Western Europe to forget old rivalries, hatreds and jealousies, the United States makes no demands as the price of the billions which its people are to contribute. The nation which first insisted on "no taxation without representation", is today taxing its own citizens for the benefit of Europe, without giving them any voice in the determination of European policy.

One can still hope that the American people will come to their senses in time to avoid losing their prosperity, their liberties, and eventually their Republic. But time is running out.

Freda Utley, an English-born economist and political scientist, was for some years a member of the Communist Party. She is the author of Lost Illusion, which treats of this experience, and other well-known books.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 16

APR 26 1948

By Frank C. Hanighen April 21, 1948

As a result of the disunity of the armed services which has become glaringly apparent in the past two weeks, the Government Reorganization Committee may step into the picture. That committee was formed to investigate and make recommendations for the reorganization of the Federal Government. It has sub-committees working on every department of the Government save that of National Defense. This omission was made in courtesy to Forrestal. Former President Hoover, who heads the Committee, reportedly took the attitude that the Secretary of National Defense should have an opportunity to try out the Unification Act.

Today, it is obvious that Forrestal, whether through his own fault or not, has failed. Indeed, it may be that Forrestal would welcome an offer from the Reorganization Committee to investigate his squalling department and to propose a remedy for its ailments. In any case, according to sources close to the Reorganization Committee, it will soon broach the matter with Forrestal and, if he assents, will appoint a sub-committee to look into the Department of National Defense. Already, the name of General Robert E. Wood of Sears Roebuck Company has been mentioned as a possible chairman of the sub-committee.

* * * * *

"That fine which Judge Goldsborough slapped on Lewis and the miners union", remarked the Labor reporter, "gives people a lot of satisfaction. But my guess is that the people will pay for it. Last year, the Court fined the UMW and Lewis. A few months later Lewis won from the operators the biggest pay raise in his history. In short, the miners got back the sum they had to pay the Government as a fine, and a lot more.

"This year, it will probably go the same way. On June 30, Lewis' contract with the operators expires. If coal is to be mined, there will have to be another wage increase. In fact, John L.'s demand for a pension was only one of his objectives. He was also preparing the way for a wage dispute in June by lowering coal stocks. There will be low stocks, then, as a result of the walkout which started a month ago. And the miners will be in a better position to get a wage increase. Plus the amount of the fine."

* * * * *

Results in Nebraska and Wisconsin have reminded us again how dangerous it is to try to foreshadow the outcome of local elections from the vantage point of Washington, D. C. However, in the case of Nebraska, it did seem reasonable to expect a good showing in that state by Senator Taft. The Nebraska delegation on Capitol Hill usually voted like the Ohioan. Senator Butler of Nebraska was a devoted admirer of his colleague and tried to swing his followers to Taft. Nebraska has become one of the most conservative states in the Union, even more deserving of that term than the proverbial Vermont. Yet, "the greatest Nineteenth Century mind in American politics today", as Taft has been called, failed to make an impression among voters who apparently have a similar attitude on political and economic issues.

It is difficult to believe that Nebraska voters turned to Stassen on the basis of issues. The Minnesotan, whatever he said on his tour of that state, has a reputation for taking stands on both sides of all questions, depending on the time and place. Nebraskans do not usually care for trimmers. Investigation of the reasons for the Stassen victory produced a number of answers. The most cogent, we found, was this: Nebraska voters looked on Stassen as a farmer from the prairies and viewed Taft and Dewey as invading Easterners.

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It would be better if the reason for the Nebraska result was local prejudice, rather than something else. It is indeed a rare day when one finds Nebraska and Max Lerner, Marxist editor of PM, on the same side of the fence. Such was the case, however, on April 15, when Mr. Lerner delivered some obiter dicta on the Nebraska result. "If I were a Republican delegate", he announced, "I should choose Stassen". Why? "One feels about Stassen", Mr. Lerner feels, "as one feels even more about Douglas and Eisenhower, that their minds are still in flux, that their notions of policy have not yet jelled, and that they might meet new crisis situations with imagination as well as strength. This is a time when imagination and growthiness of mind may prove more important than the old opinions in the old moulds." If the Nebraska voters thought (or felt -- which is worse) this way, and if such thinking is symptomatic of the nation at large, then one can speak with gloominess of "the portent of Nebraska".

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It was with some surprise that we heard, a few months ago, one of our favorite New Deal bureaucrats talking rather complacently about the prospects of a developing unemployment. However, inquiring around the town, we discovered that he was taking an official "line": the Administration planners would be far from unhappy if a million workers were to appear on the unemployment rolls. Their reasoning was as follows: a slight recession would throw a number of people out of work, increase the disposable labor force, discourage union drives for higher wages and generally check inflationary trends.

It is interesting to note that Government economists have changed their objectives. Instead of their former summum bonum of "60 million jobs", it is now "disinflation". In their planning against inflation (which their previous planning had helped to produce), 59 million jobs instead of "full employment" took on an unwonted attraction. Today, judging by Truman's speech on April 17, his economic advisers still fear rising inflation rather than recession. Hence, they look to a moderate amount of unemployment as a good rather than as an evil.

This interesting development has not been confined to such "reactionary" countries as the U. S. A. From returning travelers and analyses in economic journals, we gather that the Socialist Government of Britain would not be displeased with "some unemployment". In Norway, we find Mr. Trygve Hoff in his conservative paper Farmand (March 6) saying: "As time goes by, however, the enthusiasm in regard to full employment has started to wane, even in Labor quarters. A cynical gentleman said recently that there was not a single Socialist cabinet minister in the whole world who in his evening prayers did not ask for the return of some unemployment. . . . A moderate degree of unemployment would, in fact, be a god-send, since there is nothing else that will get the labor for the mines, the textile industries and for agriculture, and that will really clear the way for exports."

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Alfred Kohlberg, Vice-President of the American China Policy Association, held a press conference on April 16, releasing a letter to President Truman urging the latter to make public a certain report, long kept secret. The report, said Mr. Kohlberg, was one made by Vice-President Henry A. Wallace to President Roosevelt in 1944, after the former's return from the Far East. This was the only known official mission in the field of foreign policy entrusted by Roosevelt to Wallace. Therefore, Mr. Kohlberg suggested, since Wallace in his campaign today deals so largely with world affairs, release of the secret report might permit the American public to draw its own conclusion about Wallace's competency in this field.

The Association's release makes some surprising claims about the nature and influence of the Wallace 1944 report. It says that the report was the basis of

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demands made on China at the time of the Stilwell incident; that the American Ambassador in China was instructed to consider the Wallace report as a policy directive; that in accordance with the Wallace report the balance of lend-lease war materiel shipped to China under lend-lease and lying on the India side of the Stilwell Road was destroyed after V-J Day; that under this same Wallace policy American authorities in the Pacific Islands have recently been instructed not to declare as surplus and thereby make available to China, any arms and munitions stored in those islands; and finally that the Marshall mission to China was "in accordance with the Wallace recommendations".

Mr. Kohlberg was questioned by reporters at his press conference as to the source of his charges. He said that he had received this information from a number of Government officials who had read the Wallace document; and that it is now in possession of the State Department.

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On the morrow of the Bogota affair, a New York Herald Tribune reporter asked a question of Senora Gaitan, widow of the Colombian politician whose assassination touched off the explosion. The reporter, justifiably scenting Communist activities, was curious about the origin of a circular calling for a general strike. Who, he asked, had put this circular on a lamppost outside Senora Gaitan's house? The Senora replied, promptly, "The people put it there".

The machinery which exploits mysticism such as that of poor Senora Gaitan is becoming better understood these days. A coterie of frightened men in Moscow find the myth of "the people" extremely useful. Actually fearful of the people, and terrified by their rivals among the Soviet ruling class; desirous of keeping their power, privileges, luxuries -- these men shrink from no methods in their effort to maintain or extend their position. Their world network of agents is alerted to produce incidents designed to discredit "imperialistic capitalism". What better stroke than to inflict a humiliation on a "Wall Street General" in far-off Bogota. The agents have no inhibitions about starting a riot, even assassinating a "liberal" to provide the spark for the detonation. All in the name of "the people".

One interesting aspect of this picture might be considered. Words are useful in such a conspiracy, but words also wear out their welcome. It is not forgotten that Hitler also employed similar words, vide "people's courts" for the hideous tribunals where drumhead "justice" was handed down. It may not be long before editorial writers will dissect the myth of "the people" -- possibly with an approach similar to that of James Burnham in his book The Machiavellians. "When it is accepted", says Burnham, "that the rulers rule as the mere agents for the will of the masses, then their rule becomes irresponsible. The rulers are no longer personally accountable for their actions: they may go to war, persecute, steal, violate freedoms, fail to prepare for social or military crisis, and yet never be brought to task for whatever crime or failure -- they have only, they say, carried out the people's will."

Indeed, examination of the phrase "the people" might well be followed by inspection of another widely misused term, "democracy". Marxists and totalitarians can hardly object to critical scrutiny of the word "democracy". For it was not so long ago that they used it as a term of derision. More recently, they appropriated it for themselves, and "democracy" is sure-fire stuff today in any Communist election campaign. As a matter of fact, both Communists and re-emergent Fascists brandished the word "democracy" in the Italian election campaign. But neither did well, in that campaign, even with such verbal armament. Perhaps the beginning of wisdom about the true meaning of popular terms dates from the time when it becomes evident how "some people" are using them.

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Book Events

The Goebbels Diaries, translated and edited by Louis P. Lochner. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, $4.00. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Mr. Lochner has fashioned this book out of excerpts from documents that were discovered in some bales of wastepaper in one of the innumerable junk markets of Berlin. The authenticity of the diaries seems to have been pretty well established by occasional notations in a handwriting identified as that of Dr. Josef Goebbels and by various other personal papers found in the same bundles. To be sure some portions of the diaries -- and these, perhaps, the most interesting and important -- have been lost. The passages reproduced by Mr. Lochner cover only the years 1942 and 1943.

It is an example of the unfathomable ways of the Soviet mind that these diaries and the other records of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry fell first into the hands of the Russians, who, apparently, did not even bother to examine them. In their precipitate lust for Herr Goebbels' filing cabinets the Russians simply emptied the contents into a courtyard. After the cabinets were loaded into trucks for shipment to Moscow, somebody thought of getting rid of the litter by making a fire. But evidently the fire burned very slowly and was presently extinguished by rain. What remained of the rubbish in the courtyard was carted away by hungry Berliners on the lookout for whatever could be salvaged and traded for something to eat or smoke. To the original scavenger the value of the Goebbels diaries seems to have consisted of the binders in which they were enclosed. These binders were soon ripped off and doubtless sold for shoe lining or as roofing for shelters, or something of the sort. The bundles of typewritten pages, as Mr. Hugh Gibson tells us, passed through a good many hands before the unusually fine quality of the paper aroused some curiosity about their source and significance. In this way the papers came eventually into the possession of Mr. Frank E. Mason, a former associate of Mr. Herbert Hoover. By this time the sequence of the pages was lost and a good deal of patience and labor seems to have been required to get them back into order. Recently, some dispute has arisen concerning the ultimate disposition of the diaries. Mr. Mason, as I gather, wants to deposit them in the Hoover Library at Stanford University, but they have been claimed by the Alien Property Custodian.

Since we may assume that Mr. Lochner has chosen for his book the passages of greatest interest, it cannot be said that the Goebbels diaries add much to our knowledge of events. They do, however, enlarge very considerably our understanding of the psychology of the National Socialist revolution and of the character of its leaders. The diaries fully support Mr. Lochner's assertion that Goebbels was the most clear-sighted and intelligent of the Nazis, and, next to Hitler, the most powerful and influential. He was also the most ruthless and depraved. In him were combined the worst vices of the fanatic and the cynic. Goebbels believed in nothing but Adolf Hitler. This explains why he was the driving will behind the grandiose effort to exterminate the European Jews; it also explains how he could describe the methods employed in the extermination camps as "pretty barbaric". It also permitted him to perceive the moral weaknesses in the position of his adversaries. His great genius, however, lay in his discovery of the blind and demoniac powers latent in the ruthless masses of the modern world, and in his recognition of the means whereby these powers can be evoked and directed. If he was, as Mr. Lochner says, the most radical of all the Nazis, it was because he perceived more clearly than others the necessity of a total breach with history, for he recognized in everything traditional, and especially in Christianity, a restraint upon the revolutionary violence he sought to stimulate and exploit.

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